



Literacy Links

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Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First



"You have to teach children how to use comprehending processes to achieve comprehension."

Paula Moore and Anna Lyon, New Essentials for Teaching Reading in PreK-2, 2005



*This is the fifth newsletter which is being devoted to one of the five essential elements of reading instruction. The May, 2005 edition of "Literacy Links" provided an in-depth look at reading **fluency**, the June, 2005 edition provided an in-depth look at **vocabulary**, the September, 2005 edition focused on **phonemic awareness**, and the October, 2005 focused on **phonics**.*

*This month's edition of "Literacy Links" focuses on **comprehension**.*

Spotlight on... Comprehension

Comprehension is the reason for reading. It involves the process of actively constructing meaning through interaction with written language. Comprehension is not a product of reading. It is the purposeful, active, and complex meaning-making process that occurs before, during, and after reading. Before reading, efficient readers engage in the comprehension strategies of activating prior knowledge, making predictions, and asking questions. During the reading, efficient readers engage in a variety of comprehension strategies: making connections, visualizing, confirming or revising earlier predictions, making inferences, determining important information, and asking questions. A critical strategy in which readers should engage while reading is monitoring their comprehension and using "fix-up" strategies to resolve confusions, problems, or misunderstandings. After reading, efficient readers summarize, synthesize, ask questions, or make connections or inferences with what they read. Notice how many of these comprehension strategies listed occur before, during, and after reading.

Each reader interacts with each text in a unique way to create meaning. There are many factors which can influence the meaning which is created—reader's background knowledge and purpose for reading, structure and vocabulary within the text, and the level of distraction surrounding the reader.

Teaching comprehension strategies is more effective when the instruction is explicit. Teachers begin with an explanation of the strategy, when it should be used, and why it is important. Modeling how to apply the strategy to reading is the next step. Teachers then provide opportunities for guided practice of the newly learned strategy until readers are able to apply it independently. Instruction of comprehension strategies should highlight connections between the strategies. Readers should be encouraged to use comprehension strategies flexibly and in combination with each other depending on the text type and reading situation.

Description of Instructional Idea...

Question-Answer Relationships (QARs)

In the above description of the comprehension strategies used before, during, and after reading, asking questions was listed for all three of these intervals. Answering and generating questions are two comprehension

Upcoming Events

December 12~
Release of Request
for Proposals for
Maine Reading First
Sub-Grants for
Eligible LEAs

January 9~
Maine Reading First
Informational Grant
Writing Session

March 10~
Maine Reading First
Sub-Grant
Applications Due



"Comprehension means that readers think not only about what they are reading, but what they are learning."

Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis, Strategies that Work, 2000

strategies which were identified within the scientifically based reading research collected by the National Reading Panel. Questioning encourages readers to actively think and monitor as they read.

Taffy Raphael developed a classification system to help teachers and students attend to the different levels of questions which can be generated and answered before, during, and after reading. Raphael has categorized four types of question-answer relationships into two categories:

Category #1—In the Text	
Right There	The reader can find the answer directly stated within the text.
Think and Search	The reader will need to search in different places within the text and put the pieces together to determine the answer.
Category #2—In My Head	
On My Own	The reader relies on background knowledge without the aid of the text to develop the answer.
The Author and You	The reader synthesizes his/her background knowledge and the information from the author within the text to develop the answer.

The purpose of Question-Answer Relationships is for teachers and students to be aware that different types of questions have different purposes and require different levels of responses. Questions which can be answered at a literal level should be combined with those which require higher-level thinking processes to respond.

Instruction on Question-Answer Relationships should begin with short and simple texts and move to longer and more complex texts. Teachers should also focus first on simple questions and, as the students become more involved in the process, move to more difficult questions.

Summary of Professional Literacy Text...

New Essentials for Teaching Reading in PreK-2:

Comprehension, Vocabulary, Fluency

Paula Moore and Anna Lyon have co-authored this new text as part of the "Theory and Practice" series published by Scholastic, Inc. The authors devote the first part of this book to sharing the latest research and theory on children's development of comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. The second part translates this research into practical ideas for comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency which can be integrated into classroom instruction. The authors intentionally weave the importance of oral language and classroom conversations in fostering children's comprehension of written text throughout the book. The inherent relationship between comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency is also emphasized throughout this book.

New Essentials for Teaching Reading in PreK-2: Comprehension, Vocabulary, Fluency was published in 2005 by Scholastic, Inc. and the ISBN is 0439623685.

Children's Literature Title...

A Story for Bear

written by Dennis Haseley and illustrated by Jim LaMarche

This story about a bear's discovery of a new friend who shares books



*"Do you know that
great readers think and
read at the same
time?"*

Debbie Miller, Reading
with Meaning, 2002

and opens the world of reading to him will capture your heart and imagination. The enchanting illustrations of the bear nosing his way through the forest to get closer to the woman with the books and then eventually curling up beside her to listen to her read enhance the heartwarming mood of this book. "He couldn't understand any of what she was saying. But as he listened to the sound of her voice, happiness washed over him like waves." As the bear hibernates for the winter, he cuddles on top of all of the books the woman left for him and imagines her voice reading to him as he drifts off to sleep.

A Story for Bear was published in 2002 by Silver Whistle, a division of Harcourt, Inc. and the ISBN is 0152002391.

News from Maine Reading First...

Maine Reading First will release the Request for Proposals (RFPs) for the third round of competitive sub-grants for eligible LEAs on December 12, 2005 in Augusta. Eligible LEAs will receive written notification prior to this date and the list of eligible LEAs will also be posted on the Maine Reading First website at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>. The informational grant writing session for eligible and interested schools will be held on January 9, 2006 in Bangor and the grant applications will be due on March 10, 2006.

Check it out...

Reading Rockets is a national educational service funded by the United States Department of Education dedicated to providing information about how children learn to read. The website for Reading Rockets includes a wealth of resources for educators and parents which includes books, forums, videos, and articles about teaching children to read and helping children who struggle. Interested users can also sign up to receive their free monthly electronic newsletter. The website address is <http://www.readingrockets.org>



For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email janet.trembly@maine.gov

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>